

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 109592 TOSEC 110739

EXDIS, FOR SECRETARY FROM ARA - RYAN, ACTING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, CI

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM; CHILE AND THE OASGA

1. WE HAVE BEEN GIVING SOME THOUGHT TO THE CHILEAN ANGLE OF YOUR TRIP TO THE OASGA. THE HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE IN CHILE BETWEEN NOW AND THE OASGA SHOWS LITTLE PROSPECT FOR IMPROVEMENT. THERE IS CONCERN HERE THAT YOUR PRESENCE IN CHILE WILL HELP LEGITIMIZE THE MILITARY REGIME. EARLIER IN THE YEAR WE THOUGHT THINGS SEEMED TO BE LOOKING BETTER ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT. UNFORTUNATELY, PRACTICES HAVE NOT KEPT UP WITH PROMISES. THE SECURITY FORCES ARE NOT RIDING QUITE AS ROUGHSHOD AS BEFORE AND THERE HAS BEEN A REDUCTION IN THE DETENTION RATE AND REPORTS OF TORTURE, BUT WE CANNOT SAY THAT ON BALANCE THIS REFLECTS A SIGNIFICANTLY FAVORABLE TREND.

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SO MUCH FOR THE GOOD NEWS. NOW WE HAVE UNCOVERED FURTHER PROBLEMS. UNDER THE CONTINUED STATE-OF-SIEGE, PERSONS ARE STILL BEING DETAINED BUT THEIR WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN. THIS IS IN VIOLATION OF GOC LEGISLATION OF MAY 1975 AND JANUARY 1976. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN GROWING REPRESSION OF POLITICAL FREEDOMS. OPPOSITION FORCES IN THE UNIVERSITIES WERE PURGED. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

PARTICULARLY IS COMPLAINING OF INCREASED PERSONAL HARASSMENT. THEY CLAIM THIS IS RADICALIZING THE REMNANTS OF THE PARTY. AND THERE IS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THE GOC STRUCK BACK AT SEVERAL CHILEANS WHO MET WITH VISITING U.S. CONGRESSMEN.

THE UPSHOT IS A HIGHER NOISE LEVEL ON CHILE IN THE CONGRESS. FRASER CALLED US ON THE CARPET LAST WEEK TO QUESTION OUR AID PROGRAM. CHAIRMAN MORGAN HAS BEEN PRESSED BY HIS COLLEAGUES WHO VISITED CHILE TO QUESTION YOUR TRIP TO SANTIAGO. THESE SAME CONGRESSMEN ARE ALSO SUPPORTING A MID-MAY CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON ON CHILE. IT LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE A MEDIA EVENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE EVE OF THE OASGA.

THE IAHRC REPORT WILL SURFACE BEFORE THE OASGA. IT WILL SAY THERE ARE SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT; IT WILL ALSO SAY ABUSES HAVE OCCURRED. OUR OWN ASSESSMENT WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO GO FORWARD TO THE CONGRESS BEFORE JUNE. IT WILL HAVE TO REFLECT THAT THE GOC'S PERFORMANCE DURING THE LAST YEAR WAS DISAPPOINTING, THAT CREDIBLE REPORTS POINT TO ARBITRARINESS AND PHYSICAL ABUSE, AND THAT NEW GOC LEGISLATION AIMED AT REGULARIZING DETENTION PROCEDURES WAS NOT BROADLY ENFORCED AND SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS STILL CONTINUE.

THE CONGRESS WILL ALSO BE DISMAYED WHEN THEY FIND OUT THE LATEST ON THE REFUGEE PROGRAM. THE GOC HAS CHANGED ITS MIND AND NOW WILL NOT ALLOW ANY STATE-OF-SIEGE DETAINEES TO DEPART FOR THEIR ASSURED COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT. OUR PAROLE PROGRAM WILL BE SERIOUSLY IMPACTED.

THIS UNHOPEFUL TREND LED US TO ENCOURAGE BILL SIMON'S TRIP
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TO CHILE. IN CONSIDERING THIS, HE SUGGESTED THE GOC BREAK LOOSE THE EXILE DECREES TO ACCELERATE OUR PAROLE PROGRAM. THIS WAS BEFORE WE KNEW OF THE NEW GOC POLICY. THE CHILEANS HAVE NOW PROMISED TO REVERSE THEIR FIELD IN A NUMBER OF THESE CASES.

THE CHILEANS HAVE BEGUN TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACT FOR THE OASGA. THE NIGHT CURFEW HAS BEEN CUT ONE HOUR. KNOWN

DETENTION CENTERS ARE BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE POTEMKIN VILLAGES. (INTERROGATION SITES ARE ANOTHER THING.) BUT PREPARATIONS FOR HANDLING THE MEDIA TROUBLE US. A GOC BLACK LIST INCLUDES MANY FOREIGN NEWSMEN. THIS MAY PREVENT A NUMBER OF U.S. JOURNALISTS FROM COVERING ANYTHING BUT THE OASGA IN SANTIAGO. THUS PRESS HARASSMENT COULD BECOME A MAJOR STORY FROM THE OASGA.

THIS SITUATION HAS SEVERAL OPPOSING DIMENSIONS. THE

CHILEANS WILL WANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR PRESENCE TO DRAW A MORE BENIGN PICTURE OF THE CHILEAN SCENE. WE EXPECT PRESIDENT PINOCHET TO INVITE YOU TO A PRIVATE MEETING. IT WOULD BE AWKWARD TO ACCEPT, BUT AN INSULT TO REFUSE. HE IS THE ONE WE HAVE TO REACH IF WE ARE TO TURN THE GOC AROUND. ON BALANCE, IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO GO ALONG WITH THE MEETING AND TRY TO MAXIMIZE OUR RETURN FROM IT. THIS WOULD MEAN RAISING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND MAKING IT KNOWN THAT WE DID.

TO BALANCE A MEETING WITH PINOCHET, WE ARE THINKING OF A SMALL, INFORMAL MEETING OF ABOUT FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WITH PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, THE CHURCH, AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE CARDINAL AND EX-PRESIDENT FREI WOULD NOT BE INCLUDED. A MEETING WITH THEM WE THINK WOULD CAUSE SUCH STATIC WITH THE GOC AS TO JAM ANY HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGE WE DELIVER TO THE GOC.

ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, IF YOU ARE TO MEET WITH PINOCHET, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO ANTICIPATE THIS TO THE CONGRESS. YOU WILL MEET INCREASING FLAK ON YOUR PROBABLE PRESENCE IN CHILE. WE CAN ASSURE THE HILL THAT A THEME OF YOUR TRIP WILL BE HUMAN RIGHTS. ALSO THAT WE WILL VET THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBJECT WITH PINOCHET.

SOME OF YOUR LATIN AMERICAN COLLEAGUES SHOULD ALSO BE APPRISED OF YOUR PLANS. ARGENTINA, VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, AND PERHAPS SEVERAL OTHERS, MIGHT WANT TO BE CONSULTED. WE EXPECT SOME OF THEM WHEN APPROACHED WILL WISH WE HAD NOT. OTHERS MAY WARM TO THE IDEA AND TRY TO BE HELPFUL. WE ARE ASKING OUR AMBASSADORS IN THESE COUNTRIES TO GIVE US A READING ON WHAT WE CAN EXPECT AND WHETHER IT IS WORTHWHILE TO PURSUE THE IDEA. WHEN WE HAVE THEIR VIEWS AND HAVE SORTED OUT OUR OPTIONS WE WILL SEND YOU AN ACTION MEMORANDUM. SISCO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, HUMAN RIGHTS, POLICIES, BRIEFING MATERIALS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL PRISONERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: powellba
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE109592
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RVFIMBRES:NG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760173-0465
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760587/aaaacwlp.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <02 NOV 2004 by powellba>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM; CHILE AND THE OASGA
TAGS: PFOR, CI, US, OAS
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006